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PIM



FORTUYN

The Evolution of *a Media Phenomenon*

By relying on discursive opportunity theories and an evolutionary perspective on political competition, this book not only provides an original interpretation of the rise of Fortuyn, but sheds new light on right-wing populists' successes in current media-democracies more generally. It demonstrates that Fortuyn's media career was crucial for mobilizing electoral

support, which in turn boosted media attention. This self-reinforcement process explains how a stable political situation suddenly spiralled out of equilibrium.

Simulation experiments reveal that any adaptive newcomer searching for a fertile niche would have arrived at a Fortuynist-like platform. However, this study refutes the claim that Fortuyn was opportunistically driven by polls or media attention. Ideological rigidity of party leaders explains how an electoral potential could lay fallow for a long period. It provides another reason why political changes often occur in a punctuated, rather than gradual manner.

A political earthquake hit The Netherlands in 2002.

Running on an anti-immigration platform, the dramatic breakthrough of Pim Fortuyn abruptly shattered the picture that the country was seemingly protected against the political backlash of discontent about immigration seen elsewhere in Europe. This dissertation examines how Fortuyn and his party mobilized so much media publicity and electoral support so rapidly and so suddenly, and why his rise took place at that particular moment.

Jasper Muis (1976) was a Ph.D. candidate at the department of Sociology of the VU University Amsterdam. Currently, he is employed as an assistant professor at this department.



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